The Determinants of Belief in Conspiracy Theories

Paper prepared for presentation at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting
August 30, 2012, New Orleans

Scott Radnitz*
Assistant Professor, Jackson School of International Studies
Thomson Hall, Box 353650
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98115
srad@uw.edu

*This project was supported by Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences. I am grateful to Penny Visser, Jeremy Freese for their assistance. I benefited from the advice of Brian Lee and John Payne in developing this study.

Abstract

Why do people believe in conspiracy theories? Most explanations in the American political context involve demographic factors or partisan attachments, but their utility is limited because they deal with conspiracies that are closely linked to pre-existing attitudes and therefore struggle to identify the mechanisms behind conspiratorial belief in general. This study investigates both the attributes of people who are likely to believe in conspiracy theories, and the general properties of conspiratorial conjectures that make them more credible. Through an Internet-based survey experiment, I tested several hypotheses about what makes people more likely to perceive a conspiracy: whether they are in a calm or anxious state of mind; whether the putative conspirator is a government or corporation; whether the putative victim is named or left anonymous; and whether factual information changes opinions. Several families of theories find support. Conspiratorial thinking is shown to be highly situational, depending on the interaction of material, ideological, and psychological variables, and can be altered in the face of discrepant information. Factual statements caused significant changes in both "high" and "low" conspiracists in the expected direction, but were more effective in making conspiracy believers less conspiratorial.

Do conspiracy theories undermine democracy? From the "paranoid style" that Hofstadter identified in the 1950s, to the "truthers" to the "birthers" of recent times, conspiracy theories have gained large numbers of adherents and intermittently played a major role in American political life. Observers of this phenomenon have raised concerns about its implications for democratic practice (Drezner 2010). How can a democracy function effectively if a large part of the public not only lacks trust in national institutions, but many believe these institutions are actively scheming to harm them?

The answer to this question depends what exactly belief in conspiracies signifies. If belief is taken literally, then much of the public fundamentally distrusts major political institutions and is alarmingly susceptible to political appeals that stoke paranoia. In this case, the implications for democratic practice are dire. Societies in which distrust is deep and pervasive are likely to exhibit decreasing levels of compliance with the government, lower levels of political participation, and higher transaction costs in contractual relations (Levi 1989, 1997; Sullivan and Transue 1999). A more nuanced view sees conspiracies as simply an extension of political ideology, like attitudes toward gun control or affirmative action. Insofar as conspiracy belief is associated with existing partisan attitudes, they should be studied from a political behavior perspective, and may be "corrected" (or not) by addressing the underlying sources of those attitudes (Nyhan and Riefler 2010). However, this would run counter to the conventional view of conspiracies, which sees them as stemming from alienation and distrust, reflecting an individual's material and social circumstances (Abalakina-Paap et al. 1999; Goertzel 1994). The remedies for this mechanism would entail changes in public policy to address socio-economic problems.

A third theoretical approach to conspiracy theories is rooted in psychology and is essentially functional. Conspiracies represent a rational response to uncertainty—a device to economize in the midst of overwhelming information and an insurance mechanism to err on the safe side in a dangerous world. Belief may be moderated by individual dispositions, such as authoritarian values, anxiety, or emotions. As a tendency of "human nature," the attribution of nefarious agency would be essentially unavoidable and irremediable, and must be reconciled with democratic practice—and in fact, might be healthy. After all, an informed and skeptical citizenry is also essential as a check against corruption and the concentration of power. A society that displays too much trust in institutions will not be able to hold government accountable (Hardin 1999).

Of course, the possibility lurks that material, ideological, and psychological factors interact, enabling political entrepreneurs to use (or create) conspiracies instrumentally. Scholars of political behavior have noted the tendency of people to hew toward information consistent with their preexisting beliefs and to reject discrepant information. Such "motivated reasoning" leads toward rigidity of attitudes and resistance to persuasion. Politicians who understand the susceptibility of people to specific kinds of conspiratorial beliefs can sow distrust in institutions and polarize public opinion for political gain, with more worrisome implications for democracy.

Previous work on conspiracies has failed to distinguish these mechanisms, principally because it solicits opinions on actual conspiracy theories, about which people already have strong opinions or which entail obvious partisan associations. This study avoids the problem by presenting subjects with an original conspiracy vignette as part of a survey experiment to parse out the mechanisms behind belief. The results lend support for each of three mechansims—ideological, material, and psychological. Several correlates of conspiracy belief are consistent

with the "anomie" approach, but responses to the conspiracy vignette also reveal the importance of the interaction of individual characteristics with variables embedded in the vignette. Yet people are also quite amenable to persuasion in the face of new information. Overall, the implications for public trust and participation are mixed, but do not bear out the most dire pronouncements about the implications of conspiracy theories for public trust.

Previous research

A conspiracy is a plot carried out in secret by a small number of powerful actors for personal gain, at the expense of weaker ones or society as a whole, and for which direct evidence of the plot is lacking.[1] Conspiracy theories tend to assign agency to occurrences in which an agent's involvement is speculative, not manifest. They possess a seductive and simple logic that makes them superficially plausible, despite the lack of direct evidence. They are by nature circumstantial.

Most existing studies have sought to identify the individual correlates of conspiratorial beliefs.[2] The conventional view is that conspiracy beliefs reflect anomie; they predominate among the poor, disaffected, and marginalized, and are more common in times of stress and rapid change (Doty et al 1991; Douglas 1995; Durkheim 1997; Abalakina-Paap et al. 1999). Several studies have sought to link population subgroups with either specific conspiracies or conspiracies in general. For example, conspiratorial thinking has been found to be more common among African Americans, who are most likely to believe that the CIA deliberately spread the

[1] This is a variation on Zonis and Joseph (1994, p. 448), who specify the parameters of a conspiracy as: 1. A number of actors joining together 2. in a secret agreement 3. to achieve a hidden goal 4. which is perceived to be unlawful or malevolent.

[2] There is a small historical and anthropological literature documenting and describing belief in conspiracy theories over time. See, for example, Melley 2000; Goldberg 2001, Silverstein 2002; Marcus and Powell 2003.

AIDS virus in black communities (Waters 1997; Ross et al. 2006). One study found that minorities and people harboring low levels of trust were most susceptible to belief in 10 popular conspiracies, and that beliefs in a variety of different conspiracy theories were correlated (Goertzel 1994). Politically partisan subgroups also tend to be associated with one or another specific conspiracy—the "truthers" being predominantly politically liberal while the "birthers" tend to be conservative (Berinsky 2010)

While illuminating, research on specific conspiracies and the personal characteristics of their disciples does not allow us to generalize about the causes of belief in conspiracies. That is, depending on the conspiracy in question, one may conclude that democrats, republicans, whites, African Americans, wealthy, or poor are more likely to be susceptible. These findings suggest that the decision to subscribe to such a belief has expressive roots—representing an assertion of political or cultural identity—rather than deliberative or cognitive bases (Brennan and Hamlin 1998; Schuessler 2000). While this may be accurate, the measurement of belief in specific conspiracies makes it impossible to distinguish partisan or group-specific identities as a cause of belief, from other plausible mechanisms, such as psychological predispositions and cognitive processes.

Because conspiracies are a subtype of beliefs about the social world, they may be subject to the same kinds of cognitive biases that influence people's deliberation about, and comprehension of, other issues. Recent work in political psychology has investigated the processes by which people come to hold mistaken beliefs about reality, noting the common tendency of people to consider only facts that conform to their preconceived beliefs; to form interpretations in isolation from the facts one believes to be true; and to reject (reliable) evidence that conflicts with their (mistaken) beliefs (Klayman 1995; Taber and Lodge 2006; Gaines et al.

2007; Nyhan and Riefler 2010). These studies may reveal some of the mechanisms underlying the leaps of logic inherent in conspiracy theories, but because they deal with (usually political) beliefs of high emotional salience, people usually come to the experiment with strong preconceptions that prejudice their views on *that specific issue*, so these findings lack external validity.

To explain in a generalizable way why people come to believe in conspiracies, it is problematic to gauge opinion on existing conspiracy theories. Because common theories (for example, that President Obama was not born in the US, or that the Bush Administration was complicit in 9/11) are closely tied to partisan attachments, the findings merely reflect political affiliation and do not reveal the mechanisms that underlie conspiratorial belief. An alternative approach, described below, is to expose people to an original scenario that people *might* construe as a conspiracy, but which lacks the "baggage" of political associations. By presenting people with an insinuating conjecture but leaving it to recipients to impute conspiratorial motives, we can elucidate the characteristics of people who tend to believe in conspiracies in general and the properties of a conjecture make it more likely to be perceived as a conspiracy. The study design allows us to determine the relative weight of pre-existing dispositions and contextual triggers in conspiracy belief, and whether the interaction of the two is critical.

Study Design and Hypotheses

This heart of this study is a fictional "conspiracy vignette" that excludes reference to actual actors and events that could trigger partisan or ideological associations, but also retains realism by conforming to a common template for conspiracy theories. Presented as a mock news

article within an Internet-based survey, the vignette describes a mysterious illness with flu-like symptoms that afflicts a small town. A biochemical plant in the town is a potential source of the illness, but its spokesman denies responsibility, suggesting the possibility of an attempted cover-up. The study also includes a prime designed to induce anxiety, and a "factual" corrective statement that tests the strength of subjects' initial response.

The vignette-as-experiment is useful as it can be employed to elicit reactions from subjects in the context of a realistic story (here, disguised as an excerpt from a newspaper article), while concealing the "treatment" within the vignette (see Gibson and Gouws 1999; Tomz 2007). People are unlikely to have political or ideological attachments to the generic (unvarying) elements in the vignette, which could potentially result in bias, making it possible to isolate the effects of the manipulations within the vignette on subjects' post-vignette perceptions.

Random assignment to four manipulations in the survey isolates the partisan and psychological causes of conspiracy belief. The variables correspond to several hypotheses about why believe in conspiracies: whether they are in a calm or anxious state of mind; whether the putative conspirator (the biochemical plant) is a government or corporate entity; whether the putative victim is named or left anonymous; and whether factual information changes perceptions. Because these contextual variables may interact with individual attributes of the receiver, subjects also provide the usual demographic information and answer several psychological and behavioral questions, including measures of self-esteem (Rosenberg 1965), authoritarian disposition (operationalized as child-reading values; Stenner 2005), retrospective and prospective economic evaluations, and media consumption.

The first variable pertains to anxiety. Studies have shown that a subject's primed emotional state can affect how she assimilates and interprets information. Some subjects will be

randomly assigned a prime to induce anxiety (e.g. Valentino et al. 2008), on the premise that feeling insecure makes people more likely to believe that forces out of their control are shaping events (Greenberg et al. 1992; Keltner et al. 1993; Lerner and Keltner 2001; Small et al. 2006). In particular, anxiety heightens the tendency, developed through evolutionary processes, to impute agency on otherwise random or naturally caused events (Atran 2004).

I designed a "macroeconomic anxiety prime" (MAP) as a way to induce a state of anxiety by invoking a theme that is broadly relatable and potentially distressing. Subjects are randomly assigned to read a statement about the negative consequences of the financial crisis in the U.S., with mention of unemployment, debt, and declining prospects for young people. Subjects are presented with a text box and prompted to write about how the downturn has affected them personally. They are then shown the conspiracy vignette, while those who are not assigned the prime move directly to the vignette.

The prime may have unique effects on conspiracy perceptions among subjects with particular psychological predispositions. Foremost among them is authoritarian values, as authoritarian tendencies are thought to manifest themselves in conditions of perceived threat (Feldman and Stenner 1997; McCann 1997; Rickert 1998; Duckitt and Fisher 2003) and are in turn associated with distrust of institutions and perceived loss of control.[3] Anxiety should also have greater influence on the cognition of people who have low self-esteem, who may perceive a conspiracy stemming from heightened feelings of vulnerability and impotence (Smelser 1989, but see also de Jong 2001)

[3] The questions on authoritarian values are taken from the World Values Survey, in which respondents are presented with a list of attributes and asked which values a child should learn. The variable is from 0 to 4, based on how many of the traits independence, imagination, determination, and tolerance the subject selected, then reversed so that higher scores correspond to more authoritarian values.

I also include interactions of the MAP with two non-psychological variables that may moderate conspiracy belief. First, partisan identification may interact with the prime, since deliberation on negative consequences of the financial crisis may involve attributions of blame, which lead people to impose a partisan schema on the conspiracy vignette (Malhotra and Kuo 2008). Second, the prime may have a significant effect on subjects with pessimistic views on the economy, who are accordingly more susceptible to the influence of the prime. I therefore also interact with prime with a variable measuring retrospective and prospective sociotropic evaluations of the economy.[4] The hypothesis associated with the MAP are as follows:

H1: Exposure to the MAP will make subjects more likely to perceive a conspiracy.

H1a: The MAP will have a positive effect (in the direction of conspiracy perceptions) among subjects with authoritarian values.

H1b: The MAP will have a positive effect among subjects with low self-esteem.

H1c: The MAP will have a positive effect among self-identified strong liberals and strong conservatives. (This is possible if there is also a category of moderates/weak partisans.)

H1d: The MAP will have a positive effect among subjects with pessimistic retrospective and prospective views on the economy.

The second variable, whether the biochemical plant (and putative conspirator) is identified as a government or a corporate entity, tests whether this subtle modifier triggers ideological associations that affect the tendency to perceive a conspiracy. Both the government and corporations are held in low regard by the public, but the relative level of distrust varies by race, income, and political affiliation ("People and their Government"). While the ownership of the plant, on its face, does not suggest anything about its role in the tragedy in question, previous

[4] This variable is the sum of responses to two questions: whether the state of the economy was better, worse, or about the same relative to one year earlier, and whether the economy would improve, get worse, or stay about the same one year later. It ranges from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating more positive assessments.

research suggests that sentiments about the benevolence or malevolence of the government or corporations, reflecting preexisting ideological beliefs, can shape people's attributions of blame (Cook and Gronke 2005; Malhotra and Kuo 2008): In particular, because liberals tend to be more distrustful of corporations, while conservatives tend to distrust government, political ideology should moderate the impact of the treatment.

H2: The variable for the putative conspirator in the vignette (government or corporate ownership) will have not a statistically significant main effect on people's propensity to perceive a conspiracy.

H2a: Respondents who identify as conservative are more likely so see a conspiracy when government is assigned, and liberals when corporations are assigned.

A third treatment that can plausibly influence the tendency to infer malevolent intentions in the vignette is whether the victims are identifiable or anonymous. Some studies have found that information that personifies the victim(s) makes a greater emotional impact and is more likely to elicit sympathy than when the victim(s) are not personally identified (Small and Lowenstein 2003; Lowenstein et. al 2006). This detail may affect perceptions of conspiracy through cognitive processes linking greater sympathy for the victim to a desire to remedy the injustice by identifying a perpetrator. To test this mechanism, subjects are randomly assigned two versions of the victim(s) in the vignette; in one version, the article informed readers that 16 unnamed people working for the plant were infected and five died, while in the other, one person, a mother of three named Sharon Miller, died. This variable is expected to be associated with conspiracy perceptions as a main effect, and to trigger a greater emotional response when interacted with preexisting psychological factors: authoritarian values and self-esteem. Because previous research suggests that the mechanism linking recognizable victims and perceived threat

is sympathy or sadness, we can also test directly whether the named victim indeed evoked greater sadness than numerous unnamed victims. Even if the link between victim identifiability and sadness does not hold, sadness may have an independent effect on the propensity to perceive a conspiracy. Therefore, a question was included asking how much sadness the subject felt for the victim(s) in the vignette.

H3: Subjects who read the vignette with a named victim are more likely to perceive a conspiracy than those assigned the treatment with anonymous victims.

H3a: Subjects who possess authoritarian values and are assigned the vignette with a named victim are more likely to perceive a conspiracy than people with less authoritarian values.

H3b: Subjects with low-self-esteem who are assigned the vignette with a named victim are more likely to perceive a conspiracy than people with higher self-esteem.

H3c: The named victim will evoke more sadness than the unnamed victims.

H3d: Subjects who express more sadness for the victim(s) are more likely to perceive a conspiracy than those who express less sadness.

Following the vignette, respondents answer five questions: the degree to which the respondent feels sadness for the victim(s), whether there is a connection between the company/government and the victim(s), whether the company/government "did something wrong" or "is hiding something," and whether the respondent would support an investigation into the government/company's responsibility for the illness. Subjects responded on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 in which 1 is "very likely" and 5 is "very unlikely" (or "very much" to "none" in the case of sadness). To make the presentation of results more intuitive, the responses are inverted below so that higher scores correspond to higher levels of conspiracy belief (or higher levels of sadness). These questions comprise the primary dependent variable of this study.

The fourth manipulation, which follows the vignette and associated questions, is a factual statement of pertinent information intended to cause subjects to update their beliefs regarding the likelihood of a conspiracy. The ability of people to assimilate credible new information and update their beliefs in a Bayesian fashion is critical, albeit not sufficient, for reasoned deliberation, debate, and participation in a democracy (Gilens 2001; Howell and West 2009), yet some are doubtful that Bayesian updating occurs (McHoskey 1995; Bartels 2002; Taber and Lodge 2006; Nyhan and Riefler 2010).

Theories on political persuasion have not yet been applied to conspiracies. Because conspiracy belief is traditionally seen as irrational and associated with ignorance, it is generally viewed as stickier and less subject to rational appeals than ordinary political attitudes. But given the recent pessimism about people's openness to new information contrary to their existing attitudes, and since (misinformation about) "ordinary" political beliefs is often reinforced by the media and politicians, perhaps people are no more wedded to conspiratorial perceptions than to other kinds of beliefs.

To ascertain whether and under what conditions a conspiracy belief is amenable to updating based on new facts, subjects who signal belief in a conspiracy are shown a statement that militates against it (the "mitigating statement"). Conversely, people who initially reject the conspiracy conjecture are shown an insinuating statement. Subjects who are uncertain are randomly assigned one of the statements. Adaptive responses test whether persuading people into or out of a conspiracy is symmetrical, and what individual covariates make people more or less persuasible (see Gibson 1998).

The mitigating statement says that flu-like illnesses have become increasing lethal nationwide, implying that the outbreak was not exceptional and therefore not in need of

assigning blame. The insinuating statement informs readers that a lawsuit from the 1980s alleging environmental damage against the government/corporate facility was settled out of court, thus casting doubt on the plant's safety and credibility. Respondents were then asked how believable they found the statement, and, with the statement in mind, how likely they thought it was that the company/government was purposely concealing information about its connection to the illness described in the article. The text of the prime, vignette, and factual statements can be found in the Appendix.

The corrective statement that respondents receive following the five questions about the vignette is adaptive to their responses on the likelihood of conspiracy: Respondents with total scores of 3 to 7 on the last three questions (wrong, hide, and investigate) before rescaling—that is, who tended toward conspiracy thinking—received the mitigating statement, while ones with scores of 11 to 15 before rescaling received the insinuating one. Those who scored between 8 and10 were randomly assigned one of the statements.

Research on persuasion has come to contradictory conclusions about the individual correlates of persuasibility. Some have argued that education cultivates civic skills and openness to new ideas (Gibson 1998; Hillygus 2011), while others have found that political knowledge gives people greater ability to defend their position against contrary opinions (Zaller 1992; Miller and Krosnick 1996; Druckman 2004; Taber and Lodge 2006). I expect that, because subjects have not previously been exposed to this particular conspiracy, they will have little stake in defending their initial position, so the "open-mindedness" mechanism of higher education should override the "counterargument" mechanism.

But the correlates of persuasibility need not have symmetrical effects. In particular, based on past psychological research, I expect low self-esteem and authoritarian values to

correlate with persuasibility toward more, but not less conspiratorial beliefs, after the corrective statement.

H4a: Higher education and should be associated with persuasibility in either direction.

H4b: Self-esteem and authoritarian values should be associated with change only in the direction of conspiracy belief.

To reiterate, the experiment is conducted as follows: Half the subjects are randomly assigned (1) the macroeconomic anxiety prime and asked to write their response. Then all subjects are presented with a mock article, within which subjects are randomly assigned (2) that the largest employer in the town is a government laboratory or a biochemical corporation; and (3) that the victim is a named mother of three or a larger number of anonymous people who worked at the plant. Finally, depending on their responses to several questions about the article, subjects are shown (4) a contrary factual statement, and asked again to state their opinion about the incident in the vignette.

The survey was conducted over the Internet by Knowledge Networks (KN) on 1,997 US-based respondents in August 2011. Subjects who participate in the KN panel take several surveys a month and are given free Internet access or points that can be used to purchase small gifts as compensation. The panel is representative of the US population, with oversampling for underrepresented groups, and computers are provided to people who do not have one.
Before beginning the questionnaire, subjects were informed that the survey was about "how much attention people pay to details of news stories," which directed respondents to read the mock article attentively without revealing the true purpose of the study. They were debriefed about the true purpose at the end of the study.

]Results

Looking at the five questions that comprise the dependent variable, it is clear the vignette was fairly convincing, as responses tend toward the "conspiratorial" end of the spectrum, with an overall mean of 3.9 out of 5, as shown in Table 1. Respondents tend to be more ready to support an investigation (4.27) than to say outright that the putative conspirator "did something wrong" (3.52). The most important results, because they imply willingness to believe in a conspiracy, are the last four questions: connection, wrong, hiding, and investigate. The overall mean on these four questions is 3.86 (out of 5), which is roughly midway between "not sure" and "very likely" in the response scale. (We might call this response "likely" or "somewhat likely.") The dependent variable is the summed responses to those four questions, scaled between 0 and 1, with a higher score indicating a "more conspiratorial" opinion. The mean on this variable is .71; the most frequent score is 1, at about 13% of subjects. Frequencies are shown in Figure 1.

In presenting the results, I begin by showing the main effects of the experimental treatments in isolation, then I introduce covariates and interaction terms. First, what is the effect of the macroeconomic anxiety prime? Comparison of means reveals that recipients of the prime were significantly more prone to see a conspiracy than those who did not receive the prime, .73 versus .70 ($p<.001$), as shown in Table 2 below. Yet not all of those who received the prime expressed in a follow-up question that they felt worried at that moment. I therefore calculated the mean of those who received the prime and who indicated they felt "worried" or "very worried" when thinking about the state of the economy. The subsample on people who "accepted" the treatment was significantly more conspiratorial (.76) than either those who simply

received the treatment, irrespective of their emotional state, or those who did not receive the treatment.

The second condition is the affiliation of the chemical plant and the putative conspirator: government or corporation. I hypothesized that there should be no significant difference without taking into account the moderating variable of political ideology. Respondents were slightly more likely to see a conspiracy if the corporation was involved (.72 vs. .70), but the result (barely) misses conventional levels of significance ($p=.065$).

Third is the victim(s). I hypothesized that the individual named victim would elicit more sympathy and evoke conspiracy thinking. Counter to expectations, respondents were significantly more likely to see a conspiracy, .74 vs. .69 ($p<.001$), in the condition in which more (unnamed) people died. But did people whose vignette included the deceased mother of three express more sadness for the victim? In fact, respondents expressed a high level of sadness under both treatments, but were slightly more likely to feel sadness in the multiple anonymous victims condition than in the named victim condition (4.09 vs. 4.06, out of 5); the difference is not significant.

We can look at the results with more precision by breaking the sample down into the eight experimental conditions that result from the 2x2x2 factorial design of the prime and vignette. The most "conspiratorial" combination of treatments, as shown in Table 3, is Condition 3: the macroeconomic prime, corporation, and multiple victims. The second most conspiratorial is Condition 1: prime, government, and multiple victims. The least conspiratorial version is Condition 6: no prime, government, and the individual victim. The second least conspiratorial is Condition 8: no prime, corporation, and individual.

Without considering covariates or interactions, it is already clear that the prime and the nature of the information in the vignette had meaningful effects on people's perceptions of the fictional event. But to understand the larger implications of conspiracy belief, it is necessary to look at these treatments in their political and psychological contexts.

Regressions

First, I test the effects on conspiracy belief of a number of plausible covariates, leaving the treatments aside. Then I run models testing the experimental treatments as main effects, along with control variables; finally I add interaction terms. The following section tests the propensity of respondents to change their minds in response to new information.

Using OLS regression, I first test the effects on conspiracy belief of demographic and attitudinal variables, shown in Model 1 in Table 4. Political ideology and party affiliation are closely correlated, but the former has a stronger effect when placed in the same regression, so I retain only the variable for ideology.[5] The variable for liberals/extreme liberals is positively and significantly associated with conspiracy perceptions, whereas the variable for conservatives/extreme conservatives has no significant relationship. People who frequently attend religious services tend to be less conspiratorial than other categories of religiosity, contrary to the conventional wisdom. Women are more likely to perceive a conspiracy than men. Older age is significantly associated with greater conspiracy perceptions, as is less education. Neither race nor geographical region is significant, so I leave these variables out of subsequent regressions.

[5] I created dummy variables for ideology, with a 1 for liberal/extremely liberal and 0 for other categories; and 1 for conservative /extremely conservative and 0 for others.

When additional variables are included for psychological disposition and economic views (Model 2), authoritarian values is shown to be significant, but in the wrong direction—more "authoritarian" personalities are significantly *less* likely to perceive a conspiracy. Self-esteem is not significant. Economic views are highly significant in the predicted direction, with greater economic pessimism associated with conspiracy perceptions. The impact of the demographic variables is unaffected with the exception of religiosity, which loses its significance. This is likely due to its strong correlation with authoritarian values.

As Model 3 shows, when treatment variables are included, the coefficients for the macroeconomic anxiety prime and multiple victims are shown to be substantively large and significantly associated with conspiracy perceptions ($p<.001$). As expected, because the treatments were randomly assigned, the covariates are not affected.[6]

Next, I test the hypotheses involving interactions between treatments and selected covariates in turn, shown in Table 5. Model 4 tests various interactions involving the prime. When interactions are included, the main effect of the prime loses its significance. Contrary to expectations, the interactions involving both psychological variables are not significant, and neither are the interactions with political ideology. Only the interaction with economic views is significant in the expected direction ($p<.05$), as economic pessimists who received the prime are more likely to see a conspiracy. The variables for liberal ideology and economic views lose their significance since they are also included in the regression as interactions. When a dummy variable for subjects who "accepted" the treatment by indicating that they were worried is

[6] As a manipulation check, I included a question testing respondents' comprehension of the vignette, specifically the region in which the illness in the article took place. 63.4% of respondents correctly identified the region as the Midwest, while 27.4% did not remember and 8.9% guessed wrong. When I run the models using only respondents who correctly stated the region named in the vignette, the results remain substantively the same with two exceptions: in the regression with demographic variables only, "Hispanic" is significant and positive (implying Hispanics are more likely to see a conspiracy) and age loses its significance. Because these are not major differences and because the comprehension question may have been difficult, as respondents would have (and should have) been focused on the more compelling content of the vignette, I use the full sample for subsequent regressions.

included (Model 5), the coefficient is substantively large and highly significant ($p<.001$), and prime*economic views loses its significance. Collectively, these findings suggest a strong affinity between artificially induced anxiety and propensity to perceive a conspiracy.

In Model 6, I test hypotheses on the government/corporation treatment. The interaction of the treatment and conservative ideology is highly significant in expected direction (government is associated with conspiracy; $p<.01$), but the interaction with liberal ideology is not significant. When the interaction term is included, the government/corporation treatment is now significant as a main effect ($p<.05$), with corporation being positively associated with conspiracy, indicating that non-conservatives (but not necessarily liberals) are significantly more likely to perceive a conspiracy under the corporation treatment.[7]

Model 7 shows the results of the victim treatment. Contrary to the reduced model, in the full model the treatment becomes insignificant, as are its interactions with authoritarian values, self-esteem, and sadness. Yet the variable for whether the subject feels sadness for the victim(s) is highly significant ($p<.001$) as a main effect. The interaction terms involving the victim treatment thus attenuate the main effect of the victim treatment.[8]

Persuasibility?

[7] I surmised that media consumption might interact with this treatment. Recently, commentators have highlighted the effect of partisan news in causing extreme partisan attitudes. Because people with partisan leanings can be expected to seek out those news sources that align with their views (Feldman 2011; Stroud 2011), I expected that strong partisans who frequently obtain information about politics from radio, cable news, or Internet blogs would be especially prone to focus blame on their respective most-hated institution. I therefore included three-way interactions of the government/corporation treatment, liberal or conservative ideology, and acquisition of news from one of those three sources. This variable was not significant in any regression, nor was a two-way interaction of ideology*media consumption, so I exclude it from the models.

[8] The "victim" treatment however remains significant when "sadness" is included in the regression without the victim*sadness interaction term, not shown here.

The last section of the survey involved adaptive factual statements—insinuating for non-conspiratorial respondents, and mitigating for conspiratorial ones. I anticipated that there would be roughly the same number of people in each category of conspiracy perceptions (that is, scoring a total of 3-7 or 11-15 on the cumulative response scale), but this turned out not to be the case. In fact, there were 13 times as many people in the "conspiracy" as in the "non-conspiracy" category: 1295 vs. 100. Also, the mean scores for each group are not symmetrical: the "conspiracists" are close to the middle of the group range at 12.76, whereas the "non-conspiracists" are close to upper part of the range at 6.05 (that is, closer to neutrality than strong non-conspiracy belief).

To explore persuasibility in greater depth, I compare the average of subjects' responses on the four questions comprising the dependent variable used in the previous section, with subjects' post-correction response. This difference represents the degree of change in perceptions produced by the adaptive statement. Comparing these two scores reveals that first-round conspiracists' average score decreased by .44 after being shown the new "fact," (from 4.07 to 3.63) while first-round non-conspiracists' score increased by an average of .23 (from 2.98 to 3.21), as displayed in Table 6. Put differently, for the group receiving the mitigating treatment, 16.7% became more conspiratorial, 22.8% stayed the same, and 60.4% became less conspiratorial. For the group receiving the insinuating treatment, 49.6% became more conspiratorial, 14.9% did not change, and 35.5% became less conspiratorial. Thus we can tentatively conclude that it was easier to "persuade" people who perceived a conspiracy to be less conspiratorial, than the opposite. That is, the mitigating statement was more powerful.

Because the two groups did not occupy the same range in their respective conspiracy/no conspiracy categories—that is, because conspiracists were closer to the extreme part of their

range than the non-conspiracists were in theirs, the former had more room to move toward the middle of the range—they are not directly comparable in terms of persuasibility. But there is a way to determine the relative effectiveness of the two treatments. A group of 613 subjects that did not score as high or low conspiracists was randomly assigned the insinuating or mitigating statement. Analyzing this group can help determine whether it is easier to persuade people who are uncommitted to become more or less conspiratorial. Within this cohort of the uncommitted, 51.2% were randomly assigned the mitigating statement and 48.8% the insinuating statement. The first group had an average score of 3.25 before being shown the mitigating statement, and 2.86 after, for a difference of -.39. The second group had a statistically indistinguishable average score of 3.23 before, and 3.42 after, for a difference of +.19. It was thus significantly more likely that an uncommitted subject would be persuaded to be less conspiratorial by the mitigating statement than to become more conspiratorial by the insinuating statement (Table 6). Put differently, for the group receiving the mitigating statement, 17.4% became more conspiratorial, an equal number remained at the same value, and 65.3% became less conspiratorial. For the group receiving the insinuating statement, 48.5% became more conspiratorial, 14.8% remained the same, and 36.7% became less conspiratorial.

What explains the propensity to change one's views one way or another? I created a variable capturing the magnitude of attitude shift following each correction. The variable is the absolute value of the difference between the average of a subject's post-vignette (first-round) responses and the subject's post-"fact" (second-round) response, and is comprised of one-unit increments corresponding to subject's response change based on the Likert scale. To make the variable intuitive, it ranges from 0 to 4, where 4 indicates a change in the direction of conspiracy

of 4 units (from 1 to 5) for subjects in the insinuating condition; for subjects in the mitigating condition, 4 indicates the equivalent movement away from conspiracy.[9]

The results in Table 7 column 1, for subjects in the mitigating condition, show that subjects were likely to move away from conspiracy belief if they were older, highly educated (consistent with the hypothesis), high-income, and hold optimistic economic views. Education, income, and economic views had earlier been associated with non-conspiratorial beliefs, a result consistent with the premise that the same variables explain both first-round (non-)conspiracy belief, and second-round (non-)conspiratorial persuasion. Age, however, while positively associated with first-round conspiracy belief, is also associated with persuasion *away from* conspiracy after the correction. Looking at the "non-conspiratorial" group, which received the insinuating statement, authoritarian values as predicted are associated with change toward conspiracy perceptions, while men are significantly less likely to be persuaded in that direction (although they are not significantly more likely to be persuaded toward non-conspiracy). None of the treatments was significantly associated with attitude change, nor was political ideology.

Discussion

Looking at the results as a whole, the findings reveal a nuanced picture of the role of demographic, ideological, and psychological factors in explaining conspiracy perceptions. They suggest that demographic factors have much explanatory power but contextual variables can interact with psychological predispositions to shape perceptions. Several individual variables

[9] Because the first term is an average score of four responses and the second is an integer, subjects' scores on this new variable were not always integers. I collapsed their scores into 5 ordinal categories by rounding to the nearest integer, for example, 3.25 and 3.5 were coded as 4, .25 and .75 were coded as 1, and so on. The "0" category collapses both no change and change opposite of the expected direction.

were associated with conspiracy perceptions in most or all specifications: less education, lower income, women, and older age. These findings at first glance support the "anomie" hypothesis, the notion that conspiracy theories prevail among the marginalized and alienated elements of society. However, this is not the whole story; the psychological variables tested in this study are not consistent with this narrative; self-esteem was not a significant predictor of conspiracy perceptions, and authoritarian values, while significant, had the wrong sign. A significant body of research has argued that psychological factors do not manifest themselves under all circumstances, but must be triggered by a threat or other external stimulus, which the treatments can help to clarify (McCann 1997; Rickert 1998; Sniderman et al. 2004; Sibley et al. 2011).

Regarding the treatments, the macroeconomic anxiety prime was found to be highly significant in the expected direction, but the effect of the prime as a main effect was attenuated its by interaction with economic pessimism and the acceptance of the treatment by the subset of subjects who indicated they were indeed anxious following their exposure to the prime. The prime, as expected, triggered an emotional response that was heightened among people with preexisting economic concerns that in turn colored their responses to the vignette. This supports the notion that belief in conspiracy theories stems from feelings of powerlessness, and may be consistent with the claim elsewhere that an anxious person "pays extra attention to his environment, is more attentive to new information, and is more likely to break out of habitual patterns of behavior"(Valentino et al. 2008, 250).

The victim treatment also affected how subjects viewed the vignette, but the results are more consistent with a logical response than a cognitive mechanism. Subjects were more likely to associate more deaths with conspiracy, despite the anonymity of the victims. In the context of the vignette, it is logical that if a biochemical accident occurred, the putative conspirator would

have a strong incentive to cover up numerous deaths, whereas an individual death might generate less attention and could more easily be explained away. Plausibility appears to have outweighed the mechanism of sympathy. Yet sympathy plays a role—sadness was one of the strongest predictors of conspiracy perceptions even though sadness was not strongly associated with the victim treatment and the victim*sadness treatment did not achieve significance. The recurring significance of sadness across different specifications, like that of anxiety, buttresses the claim that conspiracy belief stems, at least in part, from cognitive mechanisms that direct people to impute agency to tragic events when they are emotionally distraught.

The treatment for the identity of the biochemical plant had the potential to serve as an ideological cue. As a main effect, the government/corporation variable was not significant, but when that variable was interacted with political ideology (Model 6), self-identified conservatives in the government condition were significantly more likely to perceive a conspiracy, as expected. By the same token, the coefficient on "conservative" in that model—that is, the remaining self-identified conservatives, who were assigned the "corporation" treatment—becomes highly significantly associated with *non*-conspiratorial perceptions, as do authoritarian values (which is highly correlated with conservative ideology). Ideological moderates, who are represented simply by the variable "government" in Model 6 (the residual category after accounting for conservatives and liberals) are significantly more likely to perceive a conspiracy when assigned the corporation treatment. These findings indicate the importance of the alignment of the preexisting worldview (conservatism) and the presence of a cue (government) to trigger partisan associations in the attribution of blame. However, there was no corresponding effect in either direction among self-identified liberals.

As expected, subjects were not wedded to their responses after the vignette and were highly persuasible. 60% of those who received the mitigating statement and 50% who received the insinuating statement moved in the expected direction. In the first (conspiratorial) group, the effect of the corrective statement on belief was surprisingly large, moving respondents an average of .44 on the 1-5 scale. Comparisons between the two groups (conspiracists and non-conspiracists) and analysis of responses of the "uncommitted" who were randomly assigned one of the statements show that people were significantly more likely to move in a less, rather than more, conspiratorial direction. This would appear to conflict with Gibson (1998), who found that new information was more likely to make tolerant people become less tolerant, rather than the reverse. For the group that received the mitigating statement, education, as expected, is associated with positive change, as were income and optimistic economic views. Pessimistic economic views and low income were strongly associated with conspiracy perceptions in the first round, so it would seem to reason that the mechanism linking income and optimistic economic views with first-round non-conspiratorial perceptions would also be associated with opinion *change* in the same direction in the second round. For the non-conspiratorial group, authoritarian values were associated with change toward conspiracy perceptions, despite their near irrelevance in the first round. This finding resembles that of Gibson (1998) who found that dogmatic people who were initially tolerant were susceptible to corrective information to become more intolerant. Authoritarians may be open-minded, but only when the new information conforms to their worldview.[10]

[10] It may be that authoritarians, like the dogmatic, "tend to process the initial stimulus in a highly simplistic fashion" but "the incompleteness of their initial response that makes these respondents *more susceptible* to persuasion (Gibson 1998, 838-39)."

Conclusion

This study, the first to employ a survey experiment to investigate belief in conspiracies, has shown that many of the individual factors thought to be associated with popular conspiracies such as the assassination of President Kennedy or the 9/11 "truther" movement, are also strong predictors of perceptions that a conspiracy has taken place in an original, fictional vignette. Yet the "anomie" variables do not account for all the findings. Some of the strongest findings support arguments that preexisting partisan beliefs can be triggered under certain conditions (government*conservative interaction), while others suggest that subjects applied logical reasoning (multiple victims), and yet others indicate that emotional triggers (sadness and anxiety) shape attributions of blame. Thus several families of hypotheses find support, suggesting that there is no single profile of a conspiracy theorist.

It is important to acknowledge that the main virtue of this study—the fact that the vignette did not come with expressive or political "baggage"—also has some drawbacks that limit its external validity. For one, because people had no moral investment in their responses to the vignette, they were probably more amenable to contrary facts than they would be in the real world. We also cannot discount the possibility that the "neutral" fixed elements of the vignette, such as the nature of the accident or the region where it ostensibly took place, might have had unintentionally triggered associations among specific groups of people. These findings also do not indicate how long the effect of the vignette lasts, and whether additional "facts" could persuade subjects to further change their views or whether they eventually settle on a definitive position. Given the prevalence of conspiracy theories and their outsized role in politics today, these are questions scholars should endeavor to answer.

The policy implications are ambiguous. Clearly, people are prone to believe in conspiracies that are ideologically consistent and therefore bring expressive rewards. But not all conspiracy belief is an extension of political values; it also has underlying material and psychological roots, which helps explain why conspiracies, in one form or another, seem to be present in every society at times, but become more salient when prevailing conditions threaten people's economic security and when there are political benefits to stoking them. The findings on the ideological and demographic correlates of conspiracy belief may suggest to potential conspiracy mongers what kinds of groups can be targeted and what kinds of appeals might work.

But even if we were to conclude that the high percentage of subjects who perceived a conspiracy is troubling, the persuasion experiment shows that people may be persuaded out of conspiracy belief when presented with new facts—at least in the presence of favorable material conditions. This does not mean people always respond "rationally" to new information, but it does mean there is the possibility for Bayesian updating, even when people's initial beliefs stem from less than deliberative mechanisms.

References

Abalakina-Paap, Marina, Walter G. Stephan, Traci Craig, and W. Larry Gregory. 1999. "Beliefs in Conspiracies." *Political Psychology* 20(3): 637–647.

Atran, Scott. 2004. *In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bartels, Larry M. 2002. "Beyond the Running Tally: Partisan Bias in Political Perceptions." *Political Behavior* 24(2): 117–150.

Berinsky, Adam. 2010. "Poll Shows False Obama Beliefs a Function of Partisanship." *Huffington Post*, September 13.

Brennan, Geoffrey, and Alan Hamlin. 1998. "Expressive Voting and Electoral Equilibrium." *Public Choice* 95(1): 149–175.

Cook, Timothy E., and Paul Gronke. 2005. "The Skeptical American: Revisiting the Meanings of Trust in Government and Confidence in Institutions." *Journal of Politics* 67(3): 784–803.

de Jong, Peter J. 2002. "Implicit self-esteem and social anxiety: differential self-favouring effects in high and low anxious individuals." *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 40(5): 501–508.

Doty, Richard M., Bill E. Peterson, and David G. Winter. 1991. "Threat and authoritarianism in the United States, 1978–1987." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 61(4): 629–640.

Douglas, Tom. 1995. *Scapegoats: Transferring Blame*. New York: Routledge.

Drezner, Daniel. 2010. "The Paranoid Style in World Politics." *The Spectator*, May 8.

Duckitt, John, and Kirstin Fisher. 2003. "The Impact of Social Threat on Worldview and Ideological Attitudes." *Political Psychology* 24(1): 199–222.

Durkheim, Émile. 1997. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Feldman, Lauren. 2011. "The Opinion Factor: The Effects of Opinionated News on Information Processing and Attitude Change." *Political Communication* 28(2): 163–181.

Gaines, Brian J., James H. Kuklinski, Paul J. Quirk, Buddy Peyton, and Jay Verkuilen. 2007. "Same Facts, Different Interpretations: Partisan Motivation and Opinion on Iraq." *Journal of Politics* 69(4): 957-974.

Gibson, James L. 1998. "A Sober Second Thought: An Experiment in Persuading Russians to Tolerate." *American Journal of Political Science* 42(3): 819-850.

Gibson, James L. and Amanda Gouws. 1999. “Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Attributions of Blame and the Struggle over Apartheid.” *American Political Science Review* 93(3): 501-517.

Gilens, Martin. 2001. “Political Ignorance and Collective Policy Preferences.” *American Political Science Review* 95(2): 379–396.

Goertzel, Ted. 1994. “Belief in Conspiracy Theories.” *Political Psychology* 15(4): 731-742.

Goldberg, Robert Alan. 2001. *Enemies Within: The Culture of Conspiracy in Modern America*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Greenberg, Jeff, Linda Simon, Tom Pyszczynski, Sheldon Solomon, and Dan Chatel. 1992. “Terror Management and Tolerance: Does Mortality Salience Always Intensify Negative Reactions to Others Who Threaten One’s Worldview?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 63(2): 212-220.

Hardin, Russell, “Do We Want Trust in Government?” in Mark E. Warren, ed., *Democracy and Trust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Hillygus, Sunshine D. 2005. “The Missing Link: Exploring the Relationship Between Higher Education and Political Engagement.” *Political Behavior* 27(1): 25–47.

Hofstadter, Richard “The Paranoid Style in American Politics,” *Harper’s Magazine*, November 1964:77-86.

Howell, William G. and Martin R. West. 2009. “Educating the Public.” *Education Next*, 9(3): 41–47.

Keltner, Dacher, Phoebe C. Ellsworth, and Kari Edwards. 1993. “Beyond Simple Pessimism: Effects of Sadness and Anger on Social Perception.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 64(5): 740-752.

Klayman, Joshua. 1995. “Varieties of Confirmation Bias.” *Psychology of Learning and Motivation* 32: 385-418.

Lerner, Jennifer S. and Dacher Keltner. 2001. “Fear, Anger, and Risk,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81(1): 146-159.

Levi, Margaret. 1989. *Of Rule and Revenue*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Levi, Margaret. 1997. *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Loewenstein, George F., Deborah Small and Jeff Frank Strnad. 2006. “Statistical, Identifiable and Iconic Victims and Perpetrators,” in *Behavioral Public Finance*, ed. Edward J. McCaffery and Joel Slemrod. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Malhotra, Neil, and Alexander G. Kuo. 2008. "Attributing Blame: The Public's Response to Hurricane Katrina." *Journal of Politics* 70(01): 120–135.

Marcus, George E. and Michael G. Powell. 2003. "From Conspiracy Theories in the Incipient New World Order of the 1990s to Regimes of Transparency Now." *Anthropological Quarterly* 76(2): 323-334.

McCann, Stewart J. H. 1997. "Threatening times, 'strong' presidential popular vote winners, and the victory margin, 1824–1964." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73(1): 160–170.

McHoskey, John W. 1995. "Case Closed? On the John F. Kennedy Assassination: Biased Assimilation of Evidence and Attitude Polarization." *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 17(3): 395-409.

Melley, Timothy. 2000. *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Miller, Joanne M. and Jon A. Krosnick. 1996. "News Media Impact on the Ingredients of Presidential Evaluations: A Program of Research in the Priming Hypothesis." In *Political Persuasion and Attitude Change*, eds. Diana Carole Mutz, Paul M. Sniderman, and Richard A. Brody. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Nyhan, Brendan and Jason Reifler. 2010. "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions." *Political Behavior* 32(2): 303-330.

"The People and their Government: Distrust, Discontent, Anger and Partisan Rancor." 2010. Pew Research Center, April 18.

Rickert, Edward J. 1998. "Authoritarianism and Economic Threat: Implications for Political Behavior." *Political Psychology* 19(4): 707–720.

Rosenberg, Morris R. 1965. *Society and Adolescent Self-image.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ross, Michael W., E. James Essien, and Isabel Torres. 2006. "Conspiracy Beliefs about the Origin of HIV/AIDS in Four Racial/Ethnic Groups." *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes* 41(3): 342-344.

Schuessler, Alexander A. 2000. "Expressive Voting." *Rationality and Society* 12(1): 87–119.

Sibley, Chris G., William James Hoverd, and John Duckitt. 2011. "What's in a Flag? Subliminal Exposure to New Zealand National Symbols and the Automatic Activation of Egalitarian Versus Dominance Values." *The Journal of Social Psychology* 151(4): 494–516.

Silverstein, Paul A. 2002. "An Excess of Truth: Violence, Conspiracy Theorizing and the Algerian Civil War." *Anthropological Quarterly* 75(4): 643-674.

Small, Deborah A. and George Loewenstein. 2003. "Helping *a* Victim or Helping *the* Victim: Altruism and Identifiabilty." *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* 26: 5-16.

Small, Deborah A., Jennifer S. Lerner, and Baruch Fischhoff. 2006. "Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism: Americans' Reactions in a National Field Experiment," *Political Psychology* 27(2): 289-298.

Smelser, Neil J. 1989. "Self-Esteem and Social Problems: An Introduction." In *The Social Importance of Self-Esteem, eds.* Andrew M. Mecca, Neil J. Smelser, and John Vasconcellos. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sniderman, Paul M., Louk Hagendoorn, and Markus Prior. 2004. "Predisposing Factors and Situational Triggers: Exclusionary Reactions to Immigrant Minorities." *American Political Science Review* 98(01): 35–49.

Stenner, Karen. 2005. *The Authoritarian Dynamic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stroud, Natalie Jomini. 2011. *Niche News: The Politics of News Choice.*. Oxford University Press.

Sullivan, John L., and John E. Transue. 1999. "The Psychological Underpinnings of Democracy: A Selective Review of Research on Political Tolerance, Interpersonal Trust, and Social Capital." *Annual Review of Psychology* 50(1): 625-650.

Taber, Charles S. and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 755-769.

Tomz, Michael, "Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach," *International Organization* 61, no. 4 (2007): 821-840.

Valentino, Nicholas A., Vincent L. Hutchings, Antoine J. Banks, and Anne K. Davis. 2008. "Is a Worried Citizen a Good Citizen? Emotions, Political Information Seeking, and Learning via the Internet." *Political Psychology* 29(2): 247-273.

Waters, Anita M. 1997. "Conspiracy Theories as Ethnosociologies: Explanation and Intention in African American Political Culture." *Journal of Black Studies* 28(1): 112-125.

Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press.

Zonis, Marvin and Craig M. Joseph, 1994. "Conspiracy Thinking in the Middle East." *Political Psychology* 15(3): 443-459.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Conspiracy Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sadness	1997	.00	5.00	4.07	.95
Connection	1997	.00	5.00	3.99	.97
Wrong	1997	.00	5.00	3.52	.97
Hiding	1997	.00	5.00	3.65	1.01
Investigation	1997	.00	5.00	4.26	.94

Figure 1: Frequencies of Conspiracy Variable

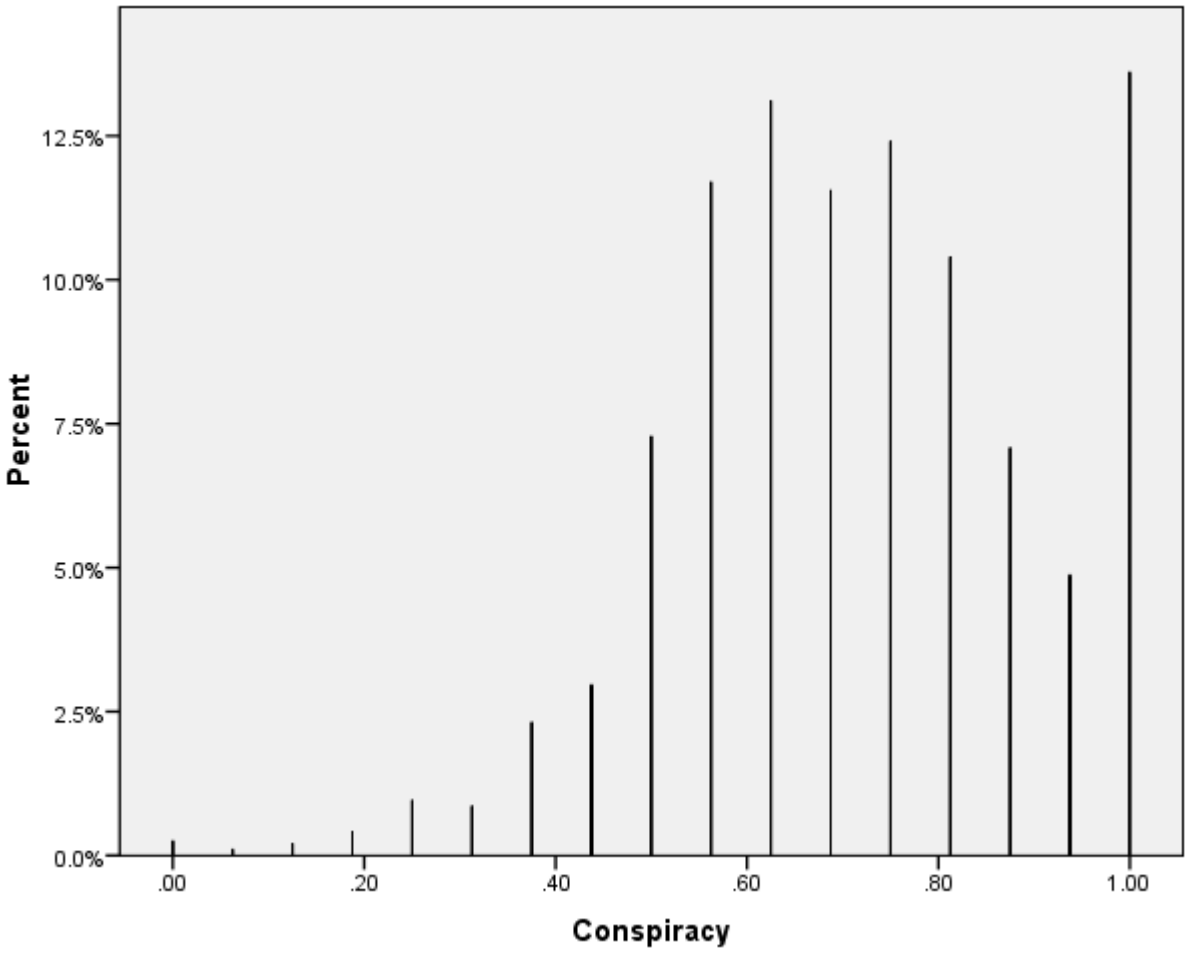

Table 2: Conspiracy Variable and Experimental Treatment Means

Treatment	Mean	N
Prime***	.73(.19)	1002
No Prime***	.70(.19)	990
Prime* “worried”***	.76(.18)	544
Government	.72(.19)	1004
Corporation	.70(.18)	988
Individual Victim***	.69(.19)	1015
Multiple Victims***	.74(.19)	977
Total	.71(.19)	1992

Two-tailed t-test for significance ***p<.001

Table 3: Conspiracy Means by 8 Experimental Conditions

Condition	Anxiety prime?	Suspect: government or corporation	Victim: mass or individual	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
1	Yes	Gov	Mass	**.74**	245	.18
2	Yes	Gov	Ind	**.70**	261	.18
3	Yes	Corp	Mass	**.77**	245	.18
4	Yes	Corp	Ind	**.71**	251	.20
5	No	Gov	Mass	**.72**	237	.18
6	No	Gov	Ind	**.66**	245	.19
7	No	Corp	Mass	**.73**	250	.19
8	No	Corp	Ind	**.67**	258	.18
Total				**.71**	1992	.19

Table 4: Regressions

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
IdeoCon	-.012(.011)	-.016(.012)	-.017(.012)
IdeoLib	.034*(.014)	.040**(.015)	.039*(.015)
Education	-.016**(.005)	-.016**(.006)	-.017**(.006)
Age	.011*(.004)	.010*(.005)	.010*(.005)
Male	-.019*(.009)	-.022*(.010)	-.022*(.010)
Household Income	-.003**(.001)	-.004**(.001)	-.004**(.001)
Religiosity	-.008**(.003)	-.005(.003)	-.004(.003)
Authoritarian Values		.015**(.006)	.-014*(.006)
Self-Esteem		-.025(.023)	-.027(.023)
Economic Views		-.061***(.017)	-.055***(.017)
Prime			.040***(.010)
Gov			-.008(.010)
Individual Victim			-.050***(.010)
Constant	.806***(.023)	.816***(.031)	.884***(.032)
R^2	.033	.050	.077
N	1667	1406	1406

Table 5: Regressions, continued

	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
IdeoCon	-.005(.017)	-.005 (.017)	-.049**(.017)	-.015(.012)
IdeoLib	.041(.022)	.041(.022)	.034(.021)	.041**(.015)
Education	-.016**(.006)	-.017**(.006)	-.015**(.006)	-.015**(.006)
Age	.011*(.005)	.011*(.005)	.010*(.005)	.007(.005)
Male	-.023*(.010)	-.023*(.010)	-.022*(.010)	-.014(.010)
Household Income	-.004**(.001)	-.004**(.001)	-.004**(.001)	-.003**(.001)
Religiosity	-.004(.003)	-.004(.003)	-.005(.003)	-.005(.003)
Authoritarian Values	-.013(.008)	.014(.008)	-.015**(.006)	-.008(.008)
Self-Esteem	-.055(.031)	-.055(.031)	-.027(.023)	-.017(.032)
Economic Views	-.023(.024)	-.023(.023)	-.059***(.017)	-.058***(.017)
Prime	.021(.044)	-.026(.046)		
Gov			-.027*(.013)	
Individual Victim				-.066(.045)
Prime_x_AuthValues	.002(.011)	.001(.011)		
Prime_x_SelfEsteem	.054(.046)	.063(.046)		
Prime_x_EconViews	-.069*(.034)	-.042(.035)		
Prime_x_IdeoCon	-.023(.024)	-.019(.024)		
Prime_x_IdeoLib	-.003(.031)	-.003(.030)		
Prime_x_Worried		.059***(.014)		
Gov_x_IdeoCon			.065**(.023)	
Gov_x_IdeoLib			.012(.030)	
Sadness				.086***(.017)
Victim_x_AuthValues				.009(.010)
Victim_x_SelfEsteem				-.006(.044)
Victim_x_Sadness				.001(.023)
Constant	.860***(.037)	.804***(.037)	.892***(.032)	.814***(.040)
R^2	.06	.07	.054	.099
N	1406	1406	1406	1406

Table 6: Means Before and After Factual Statement

First-round Group	Corrective Statement	Mean first-round response	Second-round mean	Difference	N
Lean toward conspiracy	Mitigating	4.07	3.63	-.44	1285
Lean against conspiracy	Insinuating	2.98	3.21	+.23	99
Uncommitted	Mitigating	3.25	2.86	-.39	314
	Insinuating	3.23	3.42	+.19	299

Table 7: Responses after Corrective Statement

	Statement=mitigating	**Statement=insinuating**
IdeoCon	-.016 (.056)	.141(.093)
IdeoLib	-.007 (.070)	.089(.132)
Education	.056*(.027)	.040(.045)
Age	.063**(.022)	.076(.039)
Male	-.018(.046)	-.159*(.078)
Household Income	.013*(.006)	-.015(.009)
Religiosity	.015(.015)	-.027(.025)
Authoritarian Values	.020(.026)	.122**(.045)
Self-Esteem	.081(.108)	-.241(.185)
Economic Views	.246**(.080)	-.102(.135)
Prime	-.075(.046)	-.049(.078)
Gov	-.011(.045)	.085(.078)
Individual Victim	.052(.045)	-.041(.081)
Constant	.083(.147)	1.044***(.262)
R^2	.029	.038
N	1114	284

Appendix: Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions about your thoughts and feelings at the moment. State the extent to which you agree or disagree on a scale of 1 to 5. For example, choose 1 if you strongly agree. Choose 5 if you strongly disagree.

	Strongly agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Strongly disagree	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Q1. At times I think I am no good at all.						
Q2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.						
Q3. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.						
Q4. I certainly feel useless at times.						

Q5. Here is a list of qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if any, do you consider to be especially important?

Please choose up to five by clicking in the box next to your choices.

Independence
Hard work
Feeling of responsibility
Imagination
Tolerance and respect for other people
Thrift; saving money and things
Determination, perseverance
Religious faith
Unselfishness
Obedience

[DISPLAY IF XDHS03=1 OR 2 OR 3 OR 4]
Now we are going to ask you to read an excerpt from a recent newspaper article. Please read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

[TEXT BOX; ASK IF XDHS03=1 OR 2 OR 3 OR 4]
Q6. According to a recent survey, most economists expect the economic downturn in the United States to have lasting effects not seen since the Great Depression. They highlighted the fact that

unemployment is likely to remain high for the next half-decade, while the unprecedented national debt threatens the government's ability to provide services that Americans depend on. In the longer term, experts predict that the United States will lose ground to foreign countries like China and India, and for the first time in American history, young people growing up today will be worse off financially than their parents.

Please think about the excerpt and then briefly describe what you see as the negative effects of the economic downturn. You can write about the negative effects on yourself, on people close to you, or on the country as a whole. Take a few minutes to write out your answer.

[ASK IF XDHS03=1 OR 2 OR 3 OR 4;HORIZONTAL SP]
Q7. When you think about how the economic downturn will impact people you know and the country as a whole in the future, to what extent do you feel worried?

Very worried		Somewhat worried		Not at all worried	Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6

[DISPLAY IF XDHS03=1 OR 2 OR 3 OR 4]
Now we are going to ask you to read another excerpt from a recent newspaper article. Please read the excerpt very carefully and answer the questions that follow. Some details have been changed from the original article.

[DISPLAY IF XDHS03=5 OR 6 OR 7 OR 8]
Now we are going to ask you to read an excerpt from a recent newspaper article. Please read the excerpt very carefully and answer the questions that follow. Some details have been changed from the original article.

[DISPLAY IF XDHS03=3 OR 7]
VERSION 1
The coroner's office in a small midwestern town is still baffled by the deaths of seven people who suddenly fell victim to a mysterious illness last week. Their symptoms were initially described as flu-like, but intensified within hours of the first signs of illness. So far, sixteen people have been hospitalized with similar symptoms.

The largest employer in the town is the Oakdale Biochemical Corporation. A company spokesman expressed condolences for the victims and said that an internal investigation was being conducted, but refused to answer any questions. All of the victims were long-time employees of Oakdale Biochemical.

[DISPLAY IF XDHS03=1 OR 5]
VERSION 2
The coroner's office in a small midwestern town is still baffled by the deaths of seven people who suddenly fell victim to a mysterious illness last week. Their symptoms were initially described as flu-like, but intensified within hours of the first signs of illness. So far, sixteen people have been hospitalized with similar symptoms.

The largest employer in the town is the Oakdale Biochemical Laboratory, a government research facility. A government spokesman expressed condolences for the victims and said that an internal investigation was being conducted, but refused to answer any questions. All of the victims were long-time employees of Oakdale Biochemical Laboratory.

[DISPLAY IF XDHS03=4 OR 8]

VERSION 3

The coroner's office in a small midwestern town is still baffled by the death of a woman who suddenly fell victim to a mysterious illness last week. Her symptoms were initially described as flu-like, but intensified within hours of the first signs of illness. So far, sixteen people have been hospitalized with similar symptoms.

The largest employer in the town is the Oakdale Biochemical Corporation. A company spokesman expressed condolences for the victim and said that an internal investigation was being conducted, but refused to answer any questions. The victim, Sharon Miller, 45, a mother of three, was a long-time employee of Oakdale Biochemical.

[DISPLAY IF XDHS03=2 OR 6]

VERSION 4

The coroner's office in a small midwestern town is still baffled by the death of a woman who suddenly fell victim to a mysterious illness last week. Her symptoms were initially described as flu-like, but intensified within hours of the first signs of illness. So far, sixteen people have been hospitalized with similar symptoms.

The largest employer in the town is the Oakdale Biochemical Laboratory, a government research facility. A government spokesman expressed condolences for the victim and said that an internal investigation was being conducted, but refused to answer any questions. The victim, Sharon Miller, 45, a mother of three, was a long-time employee of Oakdale Biochemical Laboratory.

[DISPLAY]

Please answer the following questions about the article.

COMPREHENSION QUESTION

[HORIZONTAL SP]

Q8. According to the article, in what region of the country did the illness take place?

West	South	Midwest	East	Do not remember
1	2	3	4	5

TREATMENT-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS.

Versions 1, 2

[ASK QA1 IF XDHS03=3 OR 7 OR XDHS03=1 OR 5]

[HORIZONTAL SP]

QA1. How much sadness do you feel for the victims?

Very much		Not sure		None

1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QA2_1 IF XDHS03=3 OR 7]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QA2_1. How likely do you think it is that there is a connection between Oakdale Biochemical Corporation and the illness?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QA2_2 IF XDHS03=1 OR 5]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QA2_2. How likely do you think it is that there is a connection between Oakdale Biochemical Government Laboratory and the illness?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QA3_1 IF XDHS03=3 OR 7]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QA3_1. How likely do you think it is that the corporation did something wrong?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QA3_2 IF XDHS03=1 OR 5]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QA3_2. How likely do you think it is that the government did something wrong?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QA4_1 IF XDHS03=3 OR 7]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QA4_1. How likely is it that the corporation is hiding something?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QA4_2 IF XDHS03=1 OR 5]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QA4_2. How likely is it that the government is hiding something?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely

1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QA5_1 IF XDHS03=3 OR 7]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QA5_1. How likely would you be to support an investigation of whether Oakdale Biochemical Corporation was responsible for the illness?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QA5_2 IF XDHS03=1 OR 5]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QA5_2. How likely would you be to support an investigation of whether Oakdale Biochemical Government Laboratory was responsible for the illness?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

Versions 3, 4
[ASK QB1 IF XDHS03=4 OR 8 OR XDHS03=2 OR 6]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QB1. How much sadness do you feel for the victim?

Very much		Not sure		None
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QB2_1 IF XDHS03=4 OR 8]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QB2_1. How likely do you think it is that there is a connection between Oakdale Biochemical Corporation and the illness?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QB2_2 IF XDHS03=2 OR 6]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QB2_2. How likely do you think it is that there is a connection between Oakdale Biochemical Government Laboratory and the illness?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QB3_1 IF XDHS03=4 OR 8]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QB3_1. How likely do you think it is that the corporation did something wrong?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QB3_2 IF XDHS03=2 OR 6]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QB3_2. How likely do you think it is that the government did something wrong?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QB4_1 IF XDHS03=4 OR 8]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QB4_1. How likely is it that the corporation is hiding something?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QB4_2 IF XDHS03=2 OR 6]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QB4_2. How likely is it that the government is hiding something?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QB5_1 IF XDHS03=4 OR 8]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QB5_1. How likely would you be to support an investigation of whether Oakdale Biochemical Corporation was responsible for the illness?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[ASK QB5_2 IF XDHS03=2 OR 6]
[HORIZONTAL SP]
QB5_2. How likely would you be to support an investigation of whether Oakdale Biochemical Government Laboratory was responsible for the illness?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[CREATE VARIABLE DOV_SUM=1-3; ADD THE CORRESPONDING VALUES FROM (QA3_2, QA4_2, QA5_2) OR (QA3_1, QA4_1, QA5_1) OR (QB3_2, QB4_2, QB5_2) OR (QB3_1, QB4_1, QB5_1) DEPENDING ON XDHS03 VALUE]

[IF ANY VARIABLE THAT GOES INTO THE CALCULATION IS REFUSED, SUBSTITUTE A VALUE OF 3 FOR THAT REFUSED VARIABLE]

Values for Display 1: SUM ≤7

[DOV_SUM=1 WHEN SUMMATION OF RESPONSE VALUES FOR QA3_1, QA4_1, QA5_1 IS LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO 7; IF XDHS03=3 OR 7]

[DOV_SUM=1 WHEN SUMMATION OF RESPONSE VALUES FOR QA3_2, QA4_2, QA5_2 IS LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO 7; IF XDHS03=1 OR 5]

[DOV_SUM=1 WHEN SUMMATION OF RESPONSE VALUES FOR QB3_1, QB4_1, QB5_1 IS LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO 7; IF XDHS03=4 OR 8]

[DOV_SUM=1 WHEN SUMMATION OF RESPONSE VALUES FOR QB3_2, QB4_2, QB5_2 IS LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO 7; IF XDHS03=2 OR 6]

Values for Display 2: SUM≥11

[DOV_SUM=2 WHEN SUMMATION OF RESPONSE VALUES FOR QA3_1, QA4_1, QA5_1 IS GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO 11; IF XDHS03=3 OR 7]

[DOV_SUM=2 WHEN SUMMATION OF RESPONSE VALUES FOR QA3_2, QA4_2, QA5_2 IS GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO 11; IF XDHS03=1 OR 5]

[DOV_SUM=2 WHEN SUMMATION OF RESPONSE VALUES FOR QB3_1, QB4_1, QB5_1 IS GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO 11; IF XDHS03=4 OR 8]

[DOV_SUM=2 WHEN SUMMATION OF RESPONSE VALUES FOR QB3_2, QB4_2, QB5_2 IS GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO 11;IF XDHS03=2 OR 6]

Values for Display 3: 8≤SUM≤10

[DOV_SUM=3 WHEN SUMMATION OF RESPONSE VALUES FOR QA3_1, QA4_1, QA5_1 IS 8 ≤SUM≤10 ; IF XDHS03=3 OR 7]

[DOV_SUM=3 WHEN SUMMATION OF RESPONSE VALUES FOR QA3_2, QA4_2, QA5_2 IS IS 8 ≤SUM≤10; IF XDHS03=1 OR 5]

[DOV_SUM=3 WHEN SUMMATION OF RESPONSE VALUES FOR QB3_1, QB4_1, QB5_1 IS 8 ≤SUM≤10; IF XDHS03=4 OR 8]

[DOV_SUM=3 WHEN SUMMATION OF RESPONSE VALUES FOR QB3_2, QB4_2, QB5_2 IS 8 ≤SUM≤10; XDHS03=2 OR 6]

[DISPLAY IF DOV_SUM=1; DISPLAY A]

We would like you to consider one more piece of information from the article:

[space]

Health officials have stressed that seasonal flu strains have become increasingly lethal nationwide in recent years and such outbreaks are not unusual.

[DISPLAY IF DOV_SUM=2; DISPLAY B]
We would like you to consider one more piece of information from the article:
[space]
In the 1980s, several residents brought a lawsuit against Oakdale for environmental damage to their property. After a protracted legal battle, they settled out of court for an undisclosed amount.

[IF DOV_SUM=3; RANDOMIZE AND RECORD; DISPLAY A OR DISPLAY B]
[SHOW CORRESPONDING DISPLAY ABOVE QC1 AND QC2 OR QC2A]
[FOR QC2 AND QC2A DO NOT SHOW FIRST STATEMENT IN DISPLAYS A AND B *"We would like you to consider one more piece of information from the article:"*]

[HORIZONTAL SP]
QC1. How believable do you find this statement?

Very believable		Not sure		Not believable at all
1	2	3	4	5

[SHOW IF XDHS03= 3 OR 4 OR 7 OR 8; HORIZONTAL SP]
QC2. With this statement in mind, how likely do you think it is that the corporation is purposely concealing some information about its connection to the illness described in the article?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

[SHOW IF XDHS03= 1OR 2 OR 5 OR 6; HORIZONTAL SP]
QC2A. With this statement in mind, how likely do you think it is that the government is purposely concealing some information about its connection to the illness described in the article?

Very likely		Not sure		Very unlikely
1	2	3	4	5

PPA0046-51
[GRID – SP ACROSS, MP DOWN]
MED1. How often do you get information about politics from each of the following sources?

	Every day	Three times a week or more	Almost every week	One to three times a month	Less than once a month	Never

[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]

Radio
Internet news sites
Paper newspapers
Television
Magazines
Internet blogs

[IF INTERNET NEWS SITES="NEVER" OR REFUSED AND TELEVISION="NEVER" OR REFUSED, SKIP TO Q34]

[GRID; SP ACROSS]

Q19. How often do you watch each of the following on television or on the Internet?

	Three times a week or more	Every week or almost every week	One to three times a month	Less than once a month	Never
National network news programs such as NBC Nightly News, ABC World News Tonight, or The CBS Evening News					
Local news programs					
Cable news networks such as CNN, MSNBC, or Fox News					

[SP]

Q34. All things considered, do you consider the state of the economy to be better, worse, or about the same relative to one year ago?

Better 1
Worse 2
About the same 3
DON'T KNOW……4

[SP]

Q35. And what about one year from now? Do you think the economy will improve, get worse, or stay about the same?

Improve 1
Get worse..... 2
Stay about the same 3
DON'T KNOW……..…4

[ASK Q36 IF Q35 ="GET WORSE"]
[MP]

Q36. You said you think the economy is going to get worse. Which of the following do you think you might change as a consequence?

How much I spend 1
How much I save..... 2
The investments I may have..... 3
None of the above **[SINGLE SELECT]** 4

[ASK Q37 IF Q35 = "IMPROVE"]
[MP]

Q37. You said you think the economy is going to improve. Which of the following do you think you might change as a consequence?

How much I spend 1
How much I save..... 2
The investments I may have..... 3
None of the above **[SINGLE SELECT]** 4

TESS PUBLIC AFFAIRS QUESTIONS FROM S12752:

PARTY7
SHOW PARTY1 IF XPARTY7 = 9 (MISSING).
[SP]

PARTY1. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a...

Republican 1
Democrat 2
Independent 3
Another party, please specify: _____ 4
No preference 5

ASK PARTY2 IF "REPUBLICAN" AT PARTY1.
[SP]

PARTY2. Would you call yourself a...

Strong Republican..... 1
Not very strong Republican 2

ASK PARTY3 IF "DEMOCRAT" AT PARTY1.
[SP]

PARTY3. Would you call yourself a...

Strong Democrat 1
Not very strong Democrat..... 2

ASK PARTY4 IF "INDEPENDENT", "ANOTHER PARTY", OR "NO PREFERENCE" OR SKIP AT PARTY1.
[SP]
PARTY4. Do you think of yourself as closer to the...

Republican Party..... 1
Democratic Party..... 2

DATA-ONLY
[SP]
DOV_XPARTY7. Merge coding of XPARTY7 and missing data ask.

Strong Republican..... 1
Not Strong Republican 2
Leans Republican 3
Undecided/Independent/Other 4
Leans Democrat..... 5
Not Strong Democrat..... 6
Strong Democrat 7
Refused.....-1

IF XPARTY7≠9 THEN DOV_XPARTY7=XPARTY7;
ELSE DOV_XPARTY7=RECODED VALUE AS DEFINED BY THE FOLLOWING:

IF (PARTY1=1 & PARTY2=1) DOV_XPARTY7=1
IF (PARTY1=1 & PARTY2=2) DOV_XPARTY7=2
IF (PARTY1=1 & PARTY2=REFUSED) DOV_XPARTY7=2

IF (PARTY1=3 & PARTY4=1) DOV_XPARTY7=3
IF (PARTY1=4 & PARTY4=1) DOV_XPARTY7=3
IF (PARTY1=5 & PARTY4=1) DOV_XPARTY7=3
IF (PARTY1=REFUSED & PARTY4=1) DOV_XPARTY7=3

IF (PARTY1=3 & PARTY4=2) DOV_XPARTY7=5
IF (PARTY1=4 & PARTY4=2) DOV_XPARTY7=5
IF (PARTY1=5 & PARTY4=2) DOV_XPARTY7=5
IF (PARTY1=REFUSED & PARTY4=2) DOV_XPARTY7=5

IF (PARTY1=2 & PARTY3=1) DOV_XPARTY7=7
IF (PARTY1=2 & PARTY3=2) DOV_XPARTY7=6
IF (PARTY1=2 & PARTY3=REFUSED) DOV_XPARTY7=6

IF (PARTY1=1 & PARTY2=REFUSED) DOV_XPARTY7=2
IF (PARTY1=2 & PARTY3=REFUSED) DOV_XPARTY7=6
IF (PARTY1=3 & PARTY4=REFUSED) DOV_XPARTY7=4
IF (PARTY1=4 & PARTY4=REFUSED) DOV_XPARTY7=4

IF (PARTY1=5 & PARTY4=REFUSED) DOV_XPARTY7=4

IF (PARTY1=REFUSED & PARTY4=REFUSED) DOV_XPARTY7=4

PREVIOUSLY PROGRAMMED IN SNO 12281 (Q7-Q10).

IDEOLOGY

SHOW IDEO IF XIDEO = 9 (MISSING).

[SP]

IDEO. In general, do you think of yourself as…

Extremely liberal 1
Liberal 2
Slightly liberal 3
Moderate, middle of the road 4
Slightly conservative 5
Conservative 6
Extremely conservative 7

[SP]

DOV_IDEO. Merge coding of XIDEO and missing data ask.

Extremely liberal 1
Liberal 2
Slightly liberal 3
Moderate, middle of the road 4
Slightly conservative 5
Conservative 6
Extremely conservative 7
Refused ..... -1

IF XIDEO≠9 THEN DOV_IDEO=XIDEO;
ELSE DOV_IDEO=IDEO.

RELIGION1

SHOW REL1 IF XREL1= 14 (MISSING).

[SP]

REL1. What is your religion?

[DO NOT ROTATE]

Baptist—any denomination 1
Protestant (e.g., Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal) 2
Catholic 3
Mormon 4

Jewish 5
Muslim..... 6
Hindu 7
Buddhist..... 8
Pentecostal 9
Eastern Orthodox..... 10
Other Christian..... 11
Other non-Christian..... 12
None 13

PROMPT ONCE.
[SP]
DOV_REL1. Merge coding of REL1 and missing data ask.

Baptist—any denomination..... 1
Protestant (e.g., Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal)..... 2
Catholic..... 3
Mormon 4
Jewish..... 5
Muslim..... 6
Hindu 7
Buddhist..... 8
Pentecostal 9
Eastern Orthodox..... 10
Other Christian..... 11
Other non-Christian..... 12
None 13
Refused.....-1

IF XREL1≠14 THEN DOV_REL1=XREL1;
ELSE DOV_REL1=REL1.

RELIGION2
ASK REL2 IF REL1 IS NOT "NONE".
[SP]
REL2. How often do you attend religious services?

More than once a week..... 1
Once a week..... 2
Once or twice a month 3
A few times a year..... 4
Once a year or less..... 5
Never 6

[SP]
DOV_REL2. Merge coding of REL2 and missing data ask.

More than once a week 1
Once a week 2
Once or twice a month 3
A few times a year 4
Once a year or less 5
Never 6

IF XREL2≠9 THEN DOV_REL2=XREL2;
ELSE DOV_REL2=REL2.